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On the Republicans' Choice

A Personal Statement

by Dwight Eisenhower

By Dwight D. Eisenhower
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Many concerned people have urged me to indicate my preference among the possible Republican candidates or to try to dictate the Republican Party's choice of a Presidential nominee this July.

I do not intend to attempt this. It is not my proper role. I do fervently hope, however, that the person selected to lead our party in the coming campaign will be a man who will uphold, earnestly, with dedication and conviction, the principles and traditions of our party.

There is no mystery about Republican principles. They have been spelled out at length in our national platforms—most recently that of 1956, on which I was proud to run for re-election, and that of 1960, for which I was proud to campaign.

These platforms represented the responsible, forward-looking Republicanism I tried to espouse as President, the kind that I am convinced is supported by the overwhelming majority of the Republican Party, the kind I deeply believe the party must continue to offer the American people.

We Republicans believe in limited government, but also in effective and humane government.

We believe in keeping government as close to the people as possible—in letting each citizen do for himself what he can do for himself, then making any call for government assistance first on the local government, then on the state government, and only in the final resort on the federal government.

But we do not shrink from a recognition that there are national problems that require national solutions. When they arise, we act.

During the Republican Administration of 1953-61 we

established the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, we extended Social Security coverage and increased its benefits, we raised the minimum wage and brought more workers under its coverage than ever before. We increased aid for hospital construction, we increased aid for medical research, we introduced a new program of medical aid for the aged. We inaugurated urban renewal, passed the first depressed areas legislation, launched a new program to help low income farmers and began the most gigantic highway building program in the history of the United States.

I cite these examples not to applaud a past record but to illustrate the positive nature of true Republicanism—spotting new needs, sizing them up, and acting decisively when their national nature and scope require it.

As a party that looks to the future, not just to the present, we Republicans believe in paying now for what we need now, not saddling those yet to come with the burden of our debts. But we believe in meeting our needs.

Right now the nation's most critical domestic challenge involves man's relation to his government and also to his neighbor—the issue of civil rights.

The Republican party was born of a crusading concern for human dignity; it retains that concern today.

There is reason for Republican pride that in the eight years of its last Administration the nation made more progress in civil rights than in the preceding eighty. We did this through vigorous Executive action, through steadfast enforcement of court decisions and through passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960—the first such acts passed since Reconstruction.

Equal opportunity and mutual respect are matters not only of law, but also of the human heart and spirit, and the latter are not always amenable to law. But the nation has a profound moral obligation to each of its citizens, requiring that we not only improve our behavior but also strengthen our laws in a determined effort to see that each American enjoys the full benefits of citizenship—benefits which no agency of government, national, state or local, has the right to abridge.

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